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61-40611

12 May 1961

**MEMORANDUM FOR: Acting Director of Central Intelligence**

**VIA : Deputy Director (Plans)**

**SUBJECT : Americans in Cuba**

Attached hereto is a suggested response to Mr. Richard N. Goodwin's queries with regard to our knowledge of Americans in Cuban jails and the procedures and difficulties encountered by Americans attempting to leave Cuba.

19/  
J. C. KING  
Chief

Western Hemisphere Division

Attachment:  
Suggested Reply

25X1 DDP/WH/ [ ] (12 May 61)

**Distribution:**

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61-4061

12 May 1961

**MEMORANDUM FOR:**

Mr. Richard N. Goodwin  
Assistant to the Special Counsel to the President  
The White House

Attached is information requested by you this date in answer to  
your questions:

What do we know about Americans in Cuban jails?

What do we know about procedures and difficulties of getting  
Americans out of Cuba?

19/  
C. P. Cabell  
General, USAF  
Acting Director

DDP/WH/ [ ] (12 May 61)

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**SUBJECT: United States Citizens Imprisoned in Cuba**

1. The following information is concerned with the identities of United States citizens imprisoned in Cuba, with the charges made against them, and with the location and regimen of the prisons.

2. General:

a. Americans Detained in Cuba in 1960: According to the U. S. Consul General in Havana, a total of 125 American citizens were detained during 1960. Of this total, approximately 25 were detained for alleged criminal charges, 30 for violating Cuban currency regulations, and 70 for political crimes against the State. Of the 55 detained for criminal and currency violation charges, 30 were released after payment of bail, two were extradited to the Bahamas for trial, 17 were released unprovisionally, two were deported, and four were still held at the end of the year awaiting trial. Of the 70 Americans held for political crimes, 44 were released after brief detention, 8 were deported, and 7 were placed under detention awaiting trial at the end of the year, four were sentenced to prison terms totaling 74 years, four were declared persona non grata, and three were executed by firing squad.

b. The Situation in 1961: After the rupture of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the U. S. in early January 1961, no official figures regarding the number of Americans detained have

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been received by this office. On 9 May the Swiss Government reported to the U.S. Embassy in Bern that it was impossible to determine the number of Americans arrested by the Cubans since the anti-Castro landings on 17 April. The Swiss report added that in the post-invasion period 250,000 persons were arrested in Cuba. Cinemas, sports arenas, and other large assemblies were used for detention areas. Numerous reports of overcrowded and unsanitary conditions have been received, as well as reports of beatings and cruelties by the militia and security forces.

c. The first authoritative accounts of post-invasion arrests to reach the United States report that prisoners are jammed into standing-room-only space and sprayed with DDT in moats in Morro prison, and that pregnant women are crowded into prison cells. At La Cabana a foreign consular official reported seeing sixty persons shot, seventeen of them massacred by the director of the prison.

#### 1. Specific Cases:

a. On 15 September 1960, 7 American citizens were arrested by agents of the Departamento de Investigaciones del Ejercito Revolucionario (DIER) on charges of complicity in audio operations mounted against the New China News Agency. Four of these Americans, Mrs. Marjorie Lennox, Mr. and Mrs. Mario Nordio, and Mr. Robert Neet were subsequently released. Three of the

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Americans, Daniel L. Carewell, Eustace H. Danbrant, and Edmund K. Taransky, remain in prison at the Isle of Pines. They were tried on the charge of espionage and sentenced to the Isle of Pines to serve 10-year sentences.

b. On 17 April 1961 Joseph O'Mallia, an American instructor in Villanueva University in Havana, was arrested by G-2. Both he and his apartment were searched. When some 20 to 30 bars of soap were discovered in the apartment O'Mallia was charged with hoarding. As of 8 May he was reported to be in La Cabana prison.

c. On 29 January 1961 Robert J. Gentile was sentenced to 30 years imprisonment for counter-revolutionary activities.

d. On 30 January 1959, John V. Martino, electronics manufacturer, 2326 Alton Road, Miami Beach, was sentenced to 13 years imprisonment for counter-revolutionary activities.

e. On 5 February 1961, Austin Frank Young Jr. was reported to have been sentenced to 30 years imprisonment on the Isle of Pines for counter-revolutionary activities.

f. On 1 January 1961, Mr. and Mrs. George Kaufman were reported to be imprisoned. Charge unknown.

g. On 20 January 1961, Louis Schmidt, James D. Banno, Alfred Eugene Gibson, Donald Joe Green, Tommy L. Baker and

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George R. Beck were charged as counter-revolutionaries and sentenced to 30 years imprisonment. They are now held at La Cabana prison.

h. On 31 March 1961 John Howard Richard (Roberts) was imprisoned at Guines prison. Charged with failure to pay hotel debts and sentenced to 2 years.

i. On 18 April 1961, Peter John Lambton was imprisoned on the Isle of Pines as a counter-revolutionary. He is serving a 25-year sentence.

j. On 23 April 1961, James W. King was arrested and held without trial.

k. Henry McAvoy and Hobart Scales were reported in the last week of April to be under arrest. No charges have been made against them.

l. William Shergalis and Howard Rundquist are reported to be held without charge since 21 March 1960 in a prison at Matanzas.

m. Drexel Gibson was arrested on 18 April. Charge unknown.

n. Guillermo Vidal Morales has been arrested on a charge of espionage and anti-Castro activities and sentenced to 30 years imprisonment. As of April 1961, Vidal was in La Cabana prison.

o. In addition to the individuals named above other U. S. citizens are believed to be held in Cuba on various charges.

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#### 4. Location and Regimen of Prisons:

a. **La Cabana Fortress:** This prison, located at Casa Blanca across the bay from residential Havana, is known for its harsh treatment of prisoners and for its poor living conditions. In 1960, security restrictions reportedly were relaxed. Prisoners were permitted to have razors, radios, electric hot plates, electric frying pans, and rations of American cigarettes and foodstuffs with the exception of canned food. This restriction on canned food was levied to prevent hoarding of food in case a riot or an attempted escape. It is believed that this temporary relaxation of restrictions is also attributable to: (1) discontent of certain prison guards who are interested in defecting; (2) fear among the prison guards that their position is increasingly insecure; (3) attempts by prison guards and officials to curry the favor of prisoners, many of whom formerly held high positions in the Army or the Government; and (4) the administrative inexperience of the chief of the prison.

b. **Castillo del Principe Prison:** Also situated in Havana and considered to be an almost impregnable fortress. Its chief, a negro, is violently anti-American.

c. **El Morro:** This prison is in Morro Castle, Havana.

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d. **Presidio Modelo de Varones (Model Prison for Men):**

This prison, considered of maximum security, is located on the Isle of Pines near the city of Nueva Gerona. There are innumerable accounts of cruel treatment of prisoners, including such things as exposure, beatings and bayonet wounds. According to a recent Swiss report, some 4,000 prisoners are held in space intended for 1,200.

e. **Prison for Women, Guanabacoa:** This prison is located about 10 miles outside of Havana. Political and criminal cases are held there. Security is reported to be quite lax, but presumably it has been tightened within the last few weeks.

f. **San Sebastian Prison, Matanzas:** Little is known about this prison except its reputation for poor sanitary conditions and maximum security.

g. **Prison in Headquarters of DIER:** (located at 14th St. and 5th Ave., Marianao, Havana) This is the detention center for political prisoners (counterrevolutionaries) picked up by the Investigative Force of the Army. Normally the jail holds less than 100 persons, but since the invasion it has been overcrowded. A responsible observer, Henry Raymond, UPI reporter who was recently arrested and taken to the DIER prison, reports that he spent 6 days there with 50 prisoners in a cell about 14 by 16 feet.

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**SUBJECT: Procedures and Difficulties in Getting Americans Out of Cuba**

1. According to a Washington Post article dated 9 May 1961, a new Cuban law requires that all persons residing in Cuba 29 or more days obtain an exit permit from the Department of Technical Investigations (DTI) of the National Police (PNR). A major difficulty is that many Americans cannot apply for exit permits because their passports, Cuban residence, or other identification documents have been confiscated by the Cuban G-2. Confiscation of documents occurred during the mass arrests and police raids beginning 15 April and increasing in intensity on 17 April 1961. An estimated 35 to 50 Americans are reported to have been picked up along with thousands of Cubans and other nationals during this period. Those who were not in prison and able to request the return of their documentation were told by G-2 to come back in a week, that G-2 had so many papers that requested documents could not yet be sorted out and processed for orderly return.

2. Reports received from the Swiss Embassy indicate that the latter could, as of 9 May 1961, neither estimate the precise number of, nor gain permission to visit, Americans in prison. The Cuban Foreign Office has thus far denied the Swiss permission to visit any Americans held. No

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precise reason can be given for Cuban refusal to consider Swiss overtures on behalf of the Americans, but a reasonable guess might be that the Cubans have arrested so many "counterrevolutionaries" (estimates running as high as 250,000), that they are uncertain as to whom they have imprisoned and where they have imprisoned them.

3. Coupled with the problems of getting out of jail and obtaining exit permits is that of arranging transportation from the island. Plane space is so limited that it is believed that a wait of 30 days or more is required before a plane seat may be obtained. Surface transportation between the United States, at least regularly scheduled runs, is sporadic.

4. A report dated 11 May 1961, from a source who appears to be reliable, notes that delays for harassment purposes are applied to departees, both American and other nationals. Cuban authorities refuse to permit airlines to process any passengers until the airplane has landed. The delay caused by this, and subsequent delay in the return flight from Cuba, is evident. In addition, Cuban authorities have at times processed outgoing passengers as many as three times before permitting them to board the aircraft. Obviously, these delays are more for harassment than for control purposes.

5. Several known cases of releases have been reported. One, Richard Valeriani, a National Broadcasting Company staff member, was under arrest

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for only three hours. Arriving in Miami on 7 May 1961, he told of hiding in an embassy in Havana and being aided by officials of this embassy to get out of Cuba. In escaping, he was forced to leave his car, his money and other property he owned in Havana.

6. A second individual, Henry Raymond, head of the United Press International staff in Cuba, told of being released after six days of detention on charges of being a United States agent. Threatened with execution, he said he was released as a result of strong pressures from the Mexican Foreign Minister, Manuel Tello, and from at least eight other governments.

7. In reply to our direct query, Mr. Huston, Acting Director of the Bureau of Consular and Security Affairs, has advised as follows: The Department of State has instructed the Swiss Government to be as liberal as possible in recognizing those individuals who apply at the Embassy in Havana and claim to be American citizens. The slightest evidence offered as proof of U. S. citizenship should suffice and permit the Swiss to issue an American passport or other identifying papers. Thus, any Americans who are prevented from leaving Cuba are not blocked by our own procedures or requirements but only by those laid down by the Cubans.

8. According to Mr. Huston, the Department estimates that there are 1,200 to 1,400 Americans still in Cuba. The Department further

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estimates that 200 to 300 are known to be trying to leave Cuba. The others either have no desire to get out or are, for unknown reasons, unable to reach the Swiss Embassy to declare their true intentions. The Department believes that about 30 to 40 Americans are in Cuban prisons.

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12 May 61

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This memorandum was prepared by WH/ and approved in substance by Gen. Cabell on 12 May. At the direction of Gen. Cabell it was revised to include additional information obtained from after the preparation; approved by C/WH Division; and handcarried to the White House by C/WH/ on 13 May.

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